

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BUCAR 00473 291139Z

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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S E C R E T BUCHAREST 0473

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, PFOR, MASS, XG, RO

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENTAL STUDY OF THIRD-WORLD CONVENTIONAL ARMS
SUPPLY RESTRAINTS

REF: STATE 011673

1. SUMMARY. ROMANIA HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR CONVENTIONAL-ARMS
PURVEYOR TO THE THIRD WORLD, BUT HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF GETTING MORE
INTO THE MARKET. ROMANIA'S SUPPLY POLICY WILL BE AFFECTED BY
HER ECONOMIC SITUATION, DRIVE FOR THIRD WORLD INFLUENCE, AND
PERCEPTION OF SOVIET THREAT. ANY OVERTLY POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD
CONVENTIONAL-ARMS RESTRAINT PROPOSALS
THIS WOULD BE CONDITIONED BY (A) INSISTENCE ON ROMANIAN PARTICIPATION
IN ANY DEBATE OR NEGOTIATION, (B) INCLINATION TO USE "DEMOCRATIC"
FORUMS (E.G. UNGA), (C) LIP SERVICE TO THIRD-WORLD DEMANDS THAT
"LIBERATION STRUGGLE" BE ENSURED SUPPLIES OF ARMS, (D) SPOTLIGHTING
OF GREAT POWERS (INCLUDING USSR) AS MAIN SOURCE OF PROBLEM,
AND (E) CONTINUING PLEADING THAT NUCLEAR, NOT
CONVENTIONAL, ARMS CONTROL SHOULD GET TOP PRIORITY.
END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BUCAR 00473 291139Z

2. AS PART OF THE STRATEGY OF SEEKING INDEPENDENCE FROM SOVIET

CONTROL, THE GOR HAS STRIVEN TO DIVERSIFY ROMANIA'S MILITARY PROCUREMENT SOURCES AND ESTABLISH CLOSER MILITARY RELATIONS WITH NON-WARSAW PACT ARMIES, "SOCIALIST" AND NON-"SOCIALIST" ALIKE. ROMANIA HAS BEGUN BOTH TO SEEK MORE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY FROM DEVELOPED SUPPLIER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING MORE THAN ONE NATO COUNTRY, AND TO SELL OR GIVE AWAY ARMS SELECTIVELY IN THE THIRD WORLD, AS WELL AS PROMOTING AMBITIOUS JOINT COOPERATIVE PROJECTS WITH FRIENDLY NON-WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES (E.G., THE YUROM JET FIGHTER WITH YUGOSLAVIA, HELICOPTERS WITH FRANCE) AND NURTURING ROMANIA'S OWN DOMESTIC ARMS INDUSTRY. COS GEN. ION COMAN RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT ROMANIA HERSELF NOW PRODUCED 70 PERCENT OF TOTAL NATIONAL WEAPONS REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING A ROMANIAN TANK (HE SAID ONLY THE TANK'S ENGINE PRESENTED TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS PRESENTLY BEYOND NATIONAL CAPABILITY).

3. THE TREND IS THUS TOWARD INCREASING MILITARY-SUPPLY AUTONOMY, REDUCTION OF DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET SOURCES AND SEARCH FOR ALTERNATE SOURCES AND FOR LIMITED ARMS-SALES OPPORTUNITIES ABROAD. FOR THEIR PART, THE SOVIETS HAVE BECOME PROGRESSIVELY STINGIER IN FURNISHING ARMS TO ROMANIA, AND AT TIMES (FOR EXAMPLE IN 1973) RUMORED BILATERAL BICKERING OVER PRICES, TYPES AND QUANTITIES CARRIED UNMISTAKABLE OVERTONES OF MUTUAL MISTRUST AND FRICTION. WE BELIEVE THE GOR CLEARLY HAS RESENTED RELATIVE SOVIET PARSIMONY IN FURNISHING MODERN WEAPONS SYSTEMS TO ROMANIA.

4. ROMANIA'S TILT TOWARD NON-ALIGNMENT AND A THIRD WORLD IDENTITY SINCE 1973 HAS HAD ITS MILITARY COMPONENT, MOST VISIBLY MANIFEST IN FREQUENT HIGH-LEVEL MILITARY VISITS. ROMANIA HAS BEEN A LATE-COMER TO THE THIRD-WORLD ARMS MARKET, HOWEVER, AND HER MEANS AND RESULTS HAVE BEEN MODEST. ROMANIA CLEARLY DESIRES TO CATCH UP, IF ONLY BECAUSE ARMS SALES MIGHT BOLSTER THE GOR'S DISAPPOINTING HARD-CURRENCY ECONOMIC POSITION NOT TO MENTION INFLUENCE TO BE GAINED WITH NON-ALIGNED REGIMES. WHILE ROMANIA HAS NOT BEEN A MAJOR, CONSPICUOUS ARMS WHOLESALER TO THE THIRD WORLD, SHE HAS MANY REASONS TO TRY TO BECOME ONE. ONE SIGNAL WAS THE CREATION OF "ROMTEHNICA" EXPORT-IMPORT OFFICE (JANUARY 1975, SEE USDAO IR NO 6 883 001075) SUBORDINATE TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. AT THE SAME TIME, ROMANIANS HAVE NOT NEGLECTED POSSIBLE ARMS SALES TO OTHER "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES, E.G. POLAND AND NORTH
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BUCAR 00473 291139Z

KOREA (SEE SAME IR, ABOVE).

5. EMBASSY FILES GIVE ONLY A FUZZY, INCOMPLETE, PICTURE OF ROMANIA'S PAST RECORD OF THIRD-WORLD ARMS DELIVERIES. NORTH VIETNAM WAS A REPORTED RECIPIENT DURING INDOCHINA HOSTILITIES BUT ON A VERY LIMITED SCALE WE UNDERSTAND. LATER THE GOR APPARENTLY TRIED TO MAKE A FEW POINTS WITH ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, NOTABLY THE ANTI-SOVIET FLNA AND UNITA, AND TO PICK

UP CASH FROM LEBANESE FACTIONS THROUGH SMALL-SCALE SALES OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES. LATE IN 1975, A PERSONNEL CARRIER-FOR-ORANGES SWAP WITH THE GREEKS WAS CONSUMATED. WE HAVE SENSED OCCASIONAL WIFFS OF GOR INTEREST IN SELLING ARMS TO LATIN AMERICA. THERE WERE REPORTS THAT EGYPT AND ROMANIA HAD DISCUSSED ARMS ARRANGEMENTS AFTER EGYPT DECIDED TO DIVERSIFY HER SOURCES OF WEAPONS, BUT THE EMBASSY HAS NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PIN DOWN WHAT, IF ANYTHING, EVENTUATED. TO ADD A MORE SURREALIST BALKAN NOTE, THE FRENCH AT ONE POINT IN 1975 HAD A RUMOR THAT ROMANIA WAS TO SELL ISRAELIS SOME TORPEDO BOATS BUILT IN ROMANIA WITH CHINESE ASSISTANCE; ONLY THE EGYPTIAN DATT SEEMED TO CREDIT THIS TALE. HOWEVER, THE ABOVE LIST IS AT LEAST ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE RATHER PROMISCUOUS RANGE OF CLIENTS ROMANIA MIGHT ATTRACT. WE CANNOT RECALL THE SLIGHTEST ROMANIAN PROCLIVITY TO ACT AS A SOVIET ARMS-SUPPLY FRONT -- AND SEE NO REASON WHY THE SOIVIETS WOULD WANT TO USE ROMANIANS FOR THIS PURPOSE AT LEAST SINCE THE 1950'S.

6. WHILE LACKING DIRECT EVIDENCE, WE BELIEVE THE GOR'S ECONOMIC POSITION IS SUCH THAT IT MIGHT EVEN BE WILLING TO DOWNGRADE ROMANIA'S NATIONAL MILITARY POSTURE SOMEWHAT IF THIS WAS NECESSARY TO CASH IN ON POSSIBLE CONVENTIONAL-WEAPONS SALES TO THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES. ALTHOUGH ROMANIA'S CAPACITY IS STILL RELATIVELY LIMITED, WE SUSPECT THAT THE GOR WANTS TO EXPLOIT ITS TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES TO THE UTMOST TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE THIRD WORLD, WHERE IT HAS HOPED TO LODGE ONE OF ITS SHEETANCHORS AGAINST SOVIET BULLYING. THIS ASSUMPTION, HOWEVER, IS CONTINGENT ON ROMANIAN PERCEPTION OF THE SOVIET THREAT, SINCE CLEARLY THE MAIN DRIVING FORCE IS GREATER INDEPENDENCE FROM THE SOVIETS AND AN ATTEMPT TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE SOVIETS THAT MILITARY INTERFERENCE IN ROMANIA WOULD BE RISKY.

7. ROMANIA'S RECENT UN POSITION PAPER ON DISARMAMENT MOSTLY IGNORED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BUCAR 00473 291139Z

ISSUES OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS AND LIMITATION. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT SHOULD OTHERS BROACH RESTRAINT INITIATIVES, IT WOULD BE IN CHARACTER FOR THE GOR TO GREET THEM POSITIVELY BUT ATTEMPT TO CHANNEL THEM INTO THE UNGA, A UN SPECIAL DISARMAMENT SESSION, OR THE BROADEST POSSIBLE "DEMOCRATIC" FORUM. ROMANIANS HAVE RESENTED FOR EXAMPLE THEIR BEING ON THE FRINGES OF THE MBFR TALKS. IN THE END THEY WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT ANY FORUM THAT WOULD INCLUDE ROMANIA. GOR WOULD POINT OUT AS IT HAS IN THE PAST THAT SINCE THE SUPER-POWERS ARE BY FAR THE MAJOR SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR THIRD WORLD, IT IS TO THEM (USSR INCLUDED) THAT RESTRAINTS SHOULD BE APPLIED; THE NUCLEAR DANGER SHOULD GET PRIORITY IN WORLD DISARMAMENT PICTURE; ANY CONFERENCE BETWEEN SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS SHOULD BE STRUCTURED IN WAY TO ALLOW VOICES OF ALL SMALL AND MEDIUM STATES TO BE HEARD, NOT RPT NOT TO PERPETRATE "BLOC-TO"BLOC" APPROACH. GOR WOULD FEEL IT WOULD HAVE TO

GO ALONG WITH THIRD-WORLD INSISTENCE THAT NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS BE ALLOWED TO BUY ARMS AS NECESSARY IN "ANTI-COLONIALIST" STRUGGLES, ALTHOUGH UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF GENERAL ARMS CONTROL MEASURES IT WOULD NOT PRESS THIS POINT TOO HARD, BUT IN OUR JUDGMENT WOULD NOT HAVE ANY SPECIFIC FAVORITE FORMS OF RESTRAINTS SO LONG AS THEY APPLIED TO BOTH BIG AND SMALL COUNTRIES AND DID NOT DISCRIMINATE".

8. WE FORESEE AS THE PRIMARY FACTORS WHICH WOULD AFFECT ROMANIAN SUPPLY POLICIES A) THE STATE OF THE ROMANIAN ECONOMY AND B) DEGREE OF SOVIET THREAT.

9. DATT HAS CLEARED THIS MESSAGE.
BARNES

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